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NCFBIS-4801-87  
6 November 87

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service

THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group

SUBJECT : Monthly Report -- Nicosia Bureau -- October

# I. GENERAL

Iranian-U.S. clashes in the Persian Gulf during October came just at the time the new Associate ROSET dish became fully operational at Nicosia Bureau, enabling the bureau to add timely new Tehran radio and television coverage. This combination of events pushed production of the Persian section to a new monthly record of 78,000 words, plus 22 video selection lists. This was in addition to extensive overtime to provide coverage of crisis events, with Persian monitors and editors coming in early on 10 days of the month to ensure live coverage of early morning Tehran newscasts. In these periods we maintained open watch on Tehran radio during the bureau's coverage hours, kept close watch on Tehran television, and filed numerous FYIs reporting on Tehran media behavior.

The first special coverage effort of the month came in response to a telephoned request from the Wire Service on 3 October, asking that the bureau open up early the next morning to cover two Tehran morning newscasts live. Western agencies later reported that at this time Iranian speedboats were massing in the Gulf and that they dispersed after U.S. units moved toward Iran. We were able to file Tehran's version of these events from our live coverage that morning. The next incident started on 8 October with agency reports that U.S. helicopters had fired on Iranian speedboats. We advised Headquarters that the bureau would again open early to cover Tehran morning casts live on 9 October, and we maintained expanded coverage and early hours through 12 October.

The third and longest special effort started on 16 October, following reports that a U.S.-flagged tanker had been struck by a missile in the Gulf. At the same time the BBC had lost coverage of the Iranian news agency IRNA due to a local line problem, and Nicosia was attempting without success to locate the agency's transmissions via satellite with the ROSET in order to provide backstop coverage. Because of the combination of a major event in the area and the loss of an important coverage source, the bureau advised that it would again open early on 17 October to provide increased live coverage of Tehran. This effort continued after the BBC recovered coverage of IRNA, through the U.S. strike against Iranian oil platforms in 19 October, through the filing of initial Iranian reports and comments on the strike, and concluded on 21 October. Following these events the bureau filed a 22 October Tehran item threatening a "crushing riposte...which will endanger U.S. interests throughout the world" and reports from Lebanese and Iranian radios on 23 October citing the Islamic Jihad as threatening "suicide operations" against U.S. and European interests in the Gulf. Tehran comment on U.S. Gulf policy was the topic of an AG analysis note on 30 October.

*John/Be*  
*Can Bureau now cut*  
*back any of this?*  
*Be 4*

## II. OPERATIONS

### A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. With the ROSET becoming operational at the end of September, the bureau added 9 hours of Tehran Persian television coverage a week from satellite. We also found Tehran domestic service radio transmissions on the same satellite, which immediately gave us excellent reception for most of the day for this source, which has been a constant reception problem for both Nicosia and the BBC. An initial survey of program content showed that the satellite radio beam carries different material from the terrestrial shortwave beams heard by the bureau and the BBC for a few hours each day. An additional 18 hours a week of radio coverage has been added from this, plus still more experimental coverage. With two Persian monitors in the section, the bureau now provides live coverage of Tehran media on all dayshifts--thus giving priority to coverage of Tehran radio morning casts--and on three evenings a week. Evening television programs on the other four days a week, when there is no evening monitor, are recorded for processing the next morning.

Following these coverage additions, MOD told the bureau: "Hqs is very pleased with bureau responsiveness and initiative on Tehran radio and television. The timing of the debut of your new dish could not have been better. Know this is a strain on your staffers, but their efforts are most appreciated."

To make time for the new coverage the bureau, with Headquarters approval, has dropped some Moscow Persian casts. We also dropped coverage of the Persian-language clandestine Radio Iran and a Baghdad cast beamed to Iran that have been unmonitorable lately.

2. As previously planned with the ROSET in operation, Nicosia took over the Tehran television coverage provided over the summer by a Tel Aviv contractor. This involves providing daily air courier delivery to London of videotapes of the Tehran 1630 GMT television newscast as well as the Friday prayers and sermons, which are often highly political. London relays these to Headquarters over INTERNET. A few of the tapes are delivered in as little as 1 1/2 days from the original broadcast, but some take as long as 4 1/2 days. Some tapes from other TV casts that yield VSL material are also sent to London via the same courier runs. This expedited delivery was especially requested by Headquarters to meet one consumer request for a 10 October Tehran telecast of a military exercise demonstrating Iranian speedboat operations. When London's INTERNET capability was interrupted on 13 October, Nicosia temporarily rerouted the daily air shipment of Tehran videotapes to Reston for 8 days until London was ready to resume INTERNET relays. Delivery time ranged from 3 to 7 days from the broadcast time for the scheduled daily TV newscasts, including handling and delivery in the headquarters area.

3. The bureau increased coverage of Beijing in Persian from 3 days a week to daily from 20 through 25 October in response to a request from Analysis Group for any Beijing comment on developments in the Persian Gulf for a Trends article. The bureau filed two responsive Beijing commentaries by the end of the month. ✓

4. Egyptian President Mubarak's address marking the beginning of his second term, carried by Cairo Domestic Service on 12 October was texted by Nicosia in 28 takes, including a 5-take out-of-turn excerpt. This elicited a message of thanks from the U.S. Ambassador in Cairo, who said, "We recognize how much time and effort goes into translating such a lengthy address." He also commented that the embassy "found the excerpt on foreign policy especially useful." Chief, Operations Group, passing along the message, added, "Our compliments to the bureau, particularly the Arabic and editorial staffs."

5. When Iraq returned from summer time to standard time a month before Jordan did, it left Amman Bureau a problem of covering the last hour of Baghdad's INA agency transmission, which continued after the bureau's normal close of business. At Amman's request, Nicosia assumed coverage of the final hour of INA each evening for the entire month until Jordan returned to standard time.

6. In response to a BBC request on 18 October, prompted by news reports of public disturbances in Soviet Armenia, the bureau recorded one Yerevan Armenian-language newscast and airtailed it to the BBC for processing.

7. The bureau took over backstop coverage of AFP for Vienna Bureau, normally the Wire's responsibility, for 5 hours on 26 October at the Wire's request because of an AFP outage at headquarters.

#### B. Lateral Services

London Bureau relayed an "urgent request" from the U.S. Ambassador in London on 29 October for the text of an exclusive interview with former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, General Bernard Rogers, published by Istanbul HURRIYET on 25 October. It was requested that the bureau attempt to file the interview against a 4-hour deadline since the Ambassador was leaving on a trip to Washington later that day. The bureau managed to file the first installment in time for the Ambassador to have it prior to his departure. He indicated that he was satisfied to wait to see the second installment after his return. The interview was also filed to headquarters.

#### C. Technical

1. Work has started on the construction of several long-wire antennas inside the compound. Trenches have been dug leading to the ~~locations for the antenna poles~~ so that the lead-in wires can be run underground, enclosed in PVC piping. With the return of the senior technician from annual leave, work has also begun to finish the cruising room.

2. A new equipment rack was installed in the ROSET room for the receiver, spectrum analyzer, and other equipment necessary for operating the ROSETs. The bureau purchased five long-play multisystem VCR's and two multisystem television sets for use with the new ROSET antennas. A plan has been prepared specifying the equipment to be installed for television recording and processing positions in the Arabic and Persian sections.

3. A ten-channel long-play tape recorder was installed in the teletype room and put into operation. Its primary use is to backstop record the KU-band satellite signal of Tehran radio.

### III. ADMINISTRATION

#### A. Personnel

1. Regional Engineer [redacted] visited Jordan Bureau (5-8 October) and Tel Aviv Bureau (27 October-1 November). STAT

2. Senior Technician [redacted] returned to the bureau on 26 October, following annual leave after attending the FSN Orientation Program in Headquarters in September. STAT

#### B. Security

The embassy issued a series of notices reminding personnel to maintain heightened security awareness as events in the Persian Gulf grew increasingly serious during the month. The appearance of suspicious characters at a Persian monitor's home set off a flurry of activity until it was determined that they were merely inept but legitimate door-to-door salesmen. The bureau advised the RSO of one Nicosia newspaper report of increased security measures at Larnaca airport that noted the possibility of "increased terrorist activity." However, the RSO was also advised later of a press report that the measures were the result of internal Dutch Airlines procedures and did not focus on Cyprus, per se. The bureau revised and reissued instructions for the contract guards and the Emergency and Evacuation Plan. All American staff rechecked and confirmed that they can communicate with the bureau using their emergency radios.

### IV. VISITS

Visitors to Cyprus: Former FBIS Cyprus hands [redacted] 7-20 October and [redacted] 6-13 October. Both couples spent 5 days in the bureau chiefs' house at the old Medburo, touring northern Cyprus and rekindling old memories. A party in their honor was hosted by the [redacted] with contemporaries of both couples attending. STAT

[redacted]

Bureau Chief  
Nicosia Bureau

ATTACHMENT: Production Report